

Water and Waste

Teachers' notes for a tour of
'Underground Manchester'



Objectives

- Pupils will develop an ‘overview’ understanding of public health in Britain between the Roman era and the 19th Century.
- Pupils will develop an understanding of the factors that led to changes in the standard of public health.

National Curriculum

The Water and Waste tour supports work in the History, Britain 1750-1900 programme of study. It is also ideal for Key Stage 4 students studying the Medicine Through Time topic at GCSE History.

Synopsis

The ‘Underground Manchester’ gallery is housed in the former Manchester terminal of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway. The gallery has many objects and interpretation panels, which can help your students improve their understanding of the development of public health since the Roman period. These notes and the student sheets are intended to act as a guide around the gallery, highlighting key exhibits and information which we hope will make this part of your visit as useful as possible.

Underground Manchester – Water and Waste

The paved area outside the ‘Making of Manchester’ gallery is a good space for introducing your group to the tour and its objectives.

To begin the tour, enter the ‘Underground Manchester’ gallery via the stairs to the right of the ‘Making of Manchester’ lobby.

The Funeral Scene – 5 minutes

The first thing you will see as you enter ‘Underground Manchester’ is a funeral scene from the 19th Century. Ask the group to look carefully at the scene and the information panels:

Who is being buried?

What might be the cause of death?

Obviously, there are no right answers to these questions, however the coffin is clearly too small for an adult and the panels opposite the scene suggest a number of diseases that were rife in 19th Century Manchester.

Roman Manchester (Mamucium) - 10 minutes

Walk around the corner into the Roman section of Underground Manchester.



The Romans settled in Manchester in AD 70 and constructed a fort in the area now known as Castlefield, the remains of which can be seen on the opposite side of Liverpool Road from MoSI. The exhibits in the Roman section of the gallery provide a good opportunity to discuss the advances made by Roman society in the field of public health. There are examples of Roman water pipes and a model of a legionary toilet, which is similar to the one used in the Castlefield Roman fort during the Roman occupation.

Split the group into four smaller groups and allow them to rotate around the displays on Roman baths; water supply; toilets and sewers. As they look at the objects and displays encourage them to work out how the Romans improved public health and why this was so important to them. Ask the students to record their findings on their sheets.

Manchester in the Middle Ages – 10 minutes

In the Middle Ages, Manchester was not a particularly important town, due to the lack of effective transport links to other towns and ports. It was however a moderately busy market town which was now built around Saint Mary's Church, which is now Manchester Cathedral.

The Middle Ages witnessed a decline in the standard of public health throughout Europe as the Romans' knowledge and skills were lost and the church tightened its grip on new learning and ideas.

The exhibits in the Middle Ages section can provide a good overview of the problems faced by the medieval residents of Manchester.

Ask your students to carefully read the panels in this section and to think about how and why public health was actually worse than during the Roman period.

There is an interesting panel on monasteries and how they were provided with clean water and sewerage systems, which students need to look at to answer one of the questions on their sheet.

18th Century Manchester – 5 minutes

The 18th Century saw the beginning of Manchester's development into an industrial city. With this came an increase in population that was to rise rapidly as Manchester moved into the 19th Century. The 18th Century section of the gallery begins with a panel on 'Manchester – The Filthy Town'.

Students could again move around the panels in smaller groups with the aim of finding out the main differences between the public health provision for wealthy people and for poor people.

Students will probably find it easier to locate information on the lives of ordinary Mancunians, however, there is information about how wealthy

households had priority over clean drinking water and how the working-classes were excluded from the Infirmary Baths.

19th Century Manchester – 20 minutes

The 19th Century saw a revolution in Manchester which became the world's first industrial city as houses for the workers were rapidly built around the new textile mills.

The 19th Century area of the gallery is the largest section and contains some of the best objects and displays for students to look at.

Split the group into three smaller groups.

Ask one group to look for and read the 'Campaign for Improvement' panel and note down some of the factors that led to the improvement of Manchester's water supply and sewerage system in the 19th Century.

Ask another group to look at the cholera cartoon which is both on their sheet and on the 'Cholera in Manchester' panel. The cartoon can be annotated on the sheet. Students should think about why the cartoon was published; what its message was and why it was effective.

Ask the third group to try to find the answers to the questions in the 'Mucky Manchester' section of their sheet:

(To listen to the ballad on the flood of 1872, a button has to be pressed to activate playback.)

Ask the groups to rotate around the panels until all groups have covered all three activities.

The Sewer and Toilets – 10 minutes

The reconstructed sewer is a replica of the Liverpool Road sewer built in 1896. Many smaller pipes carrying sewage from surrounding streets fed into this main sewer, these can be seen as you walk through. The shape of the sewer is important – an egg shaped design was chosen both for strength and so the sewage would flow at both low and high levels.

Before the Victorian sewerage system was built in Manchester, the 'Nightsoil Man' provided the main method of removing toilet waste from the city – this was then sold on for use as fertiliser. As you exit the sewer a scale model of a 'Nightsoil' cart of the type used in Manchester before the sewers were built is displayed.



Continue walking through the gallery into the next section which is dedicated to the development of toilets. Ask the students to find the four toilets pictured on their sheets and to put them into chronological order.



The Privy Midden

This is the earliest toilet on display. The sewerage would simply fall into a cesspit below.



The Pale Midden.

This was an improvement as the sewerage fell into a bucket which was taken away by the 'Nightsoil Man'



The Tipper.

This is from the end of the 19th Century – it flushed when filled with water from the kitchen sink, rather than when you wanted it to!



The Water Closet

This type of toilet was common by the end of the 19th Century. It works exactly like a modern toilet with a flush from the cistern.

Plenary

To finish the tour, gather your group in the area in front of the laundry display and ask students to plot on the graph the standard of public health for both wealthy and poor people throughout the periods covered by the gallery. This can be used as a basis for a written task on the factors for change on your return to school.